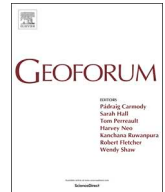




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# Gathering of the Clouds: Attending to Indigenous understandings of time and climate through songspirals

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## ABSTRACT

New engagements between humans and with the environment are vitally necessary in this perilous period of intensified environmental change. Climate change policy interventions and public discourses persistently frame climate as outside human experience, something to be controlled and understood within a strict, linear, universalist and ultimately colonising understanding of time. Yet constructions that suggest that humans are separate from, act upon or may manage or control a passive environment may be offensive to a sentient world, while relegation of the past to 'the past' ignores the many enduring violences of colonialism and multiple sustained efforts to nurture multi-temporal relationships of belonging and care. In this paper, our more-than-human Indigenous and non-Indigenous research collective share understandings of time led by the Yolŋu songspiral, Wukun or Gathering of the Clouds, from northern Australia. Wukun challenges many orders and disciplines of colonial structures, including those associated with time and climate change. In place of an abstract, distant and unbound climate, locked into a linear, passive timescape, Wukun suggests time as multiple, agential, and a manifestation of co-becoming. Rather than being responsible to or responsible for climate as something passive and separate from humans, Wukun signals a need to cultivate abilities to attend deeply to place's agency and act through co-becoming. In this way, we may understand and respond to climate change as relational and patterned, embodied and affective, and co-constituted through more-than-human placed and multi-temporal relationships.

## 1. Wukun

Climate change policy interventions and public discourses alike tend to persistently frame the issue of climate change in terms of a range of dualisms (Head, 2016; O'Lear, 2016). Climate change is seen as outside human experience, an impending doom, always out there and generally in an apocalyptic future – at least for the West – something to be understood and controlled rationally, or ignored and denied, in ways underpinned by an often unacknowledged fear (Cook and Balayannis, 2015). There are 'goodies' and 'baddies' on climate, there is a deep past, a now and a future, there are people acting upon, but always fundamentally distinct from, an unreliable environment which requires knowing and controlling and possibly saving, and there are "natural" and "human-made" events which must be distinguished (Castree, 2014; Davison, 2015; Gibson et al., 2015; Rose and van Dooren, 2011).

In such dominant constructions, climate is often defined in a

technocratic manner, abstracted, linear and measured (through temperature, humidity, means, frequencies and extremes). It is the "normal or mean course of the weather," the "future expectation of long term weather, in the order of weeks, months or years ahead" (Bureau of Meteorology, n.d). Measurements become ways to gauge and produce expectations. In this way, climate becomes a container to hold hopes, a container that should perform in normal, predictable and stable ways. There is little recognition of the deep material and symbolic connections that enable cultures, beings, becomings, and places. There is little scope for tragedy, grief and fear, for love and understanding, for nourishing survivances. There is little scope to see either the place-based, sometimes small scale, disruptions and more-than-human violences that create and perpetuate the problem, nor the ways that different people are disproportionately affected (Lipset, 2014), nor, crucially, the myriad place-based and pluralist responses that nourish different kinds of worldings.

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Such framings are understood as problematic (Davison, 2015; Gibson-Graham, 2011). They tend to deny certain human experiences, active agencies beyond the human, and humans' intrinsic bonds with their worlds (Neimanis and Loewen Walker, 2014; Rose, 2008). Where they enable injustices and/or a lack of action around unsustainable relationships with weather, they become alarming, violent even. Importantly, they can lead to paralysis and inaction (Rose, 2008), to technocentric, exclusionary, even imperialist or neo-colonialist approaches that reinforce the very problems that they aim to respond to. They become a matter of measurement and long-term trends, debates around normality in ways that feed suggestions of certain weather events as mere blips that do or do not show an underlying trend beyond expectations. Underpinning such mainstream constructions is, crucially, a tendency to hold both climate and change within a strict, linear, universalist and ultimately colonising understanding of time. Yet, as Natcher et al. (2007) point out, suggestions that the future can be predicted or controlled may be offensive to a sentient world, while the relegation of the past to a singular, static, bound period of 'time' known as 'the past', ignores the many enduring violences of colonialism and concurrent efforts to nurture relationships of belonging and care.

It has, then, become increasingly clear that responding to disruptive environmental change, including climate change, requires different ways of understanding and responding in, with and as place and time. Many call for such a refocusing, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous geographers, feminists and other academics (Atleo, 2011; Castree, 2014; Head, 2016; Gibson et al., 2015; Gibson-Graham, 2011; Larsen and Johnson, 2017), and a wide range of climate change activists, artists and environmental and, indeed, climate change scientists who are desperate for their complex sciences to be taken seriously (see, for example, Allison et al., 2011; Barclay, 2017; Hughes, 2014).

For many, the need for a refocus comes from both a deep concern about the patterns of extinction and violence that have been, are and will be associated with climate change *and* the need to push back against some of the stories that are used, in particular in Western sciences, to talk about them. One way to do this is to attend to the diverse and culturally imbued ways humans are bound up with their worlds. Such approaches (Bawaka Country et al., 2016a; Nzumalo, 2016; Ruddick, 2017; Vannini et al., 2012) emphasise that humans do not stand separate to their environment, or, more richly, cannot be understood as separate from place or Country<sup>1</sup> as it is named in the Australian context, or indeed from each other, but rather are co-constituted with it, co-emergent.

This paper responds to this call for refocusing, and to the dilemmas posed by climate change, through our experiences as a more-than-human, Indigenous and non-Indigenous research collective led by Bawaka Country in northeast Arnhem Land, Australia. We are led by Country, by the specificities of our nourishing relationality as place (Larsen and Johnson, 2017). In this paper, we share Wukun, a Yolŋu songspiral which is translated into English as the Gathering of the Clouds. Songspirals, commonly known as songlines, are rich and multi-layered articulations, passed down through the generations and sung by Aboriginal people to wake Country, to make and remake the life-giving connections between people and place – people co-becoming as *place* (Burarrwanga et al., 2019; Rose, 1996, 2007). Wukun is a Dhuwa<sup>2</sup> songspiral that gathers the clouds and creates the rain. It renews life. The clouds are both people and Country and the songspiral makes and re-makes both. Wukun is thus an embodied and affective co-constitution of peoples, places, times and complex weatherings including

clouds, winds, mists and seasons (Ingold, 2007, 2010; Vannini et al., 2012). Wukun challenges many dominant Western assumptions around climate, weather and time, for example the tendency to set climate (as abstract and measurable) and weather (as ephemeral and embodied) in opposition. Wukun, rather, points to weather and climate as patterned, relational, affective and deeply situated; as co-becomings in, with and as Country. It also signals the need to nurture multi-temporal, more-than-human relationships of belonging and care.

We share Wukun as Bawaka Country and acknowledge Country as lead author on this article. Indeed, as co-constituted with Country, not separate from it, this article is authored by Bawaka Country *including* the humans. Our Bawaka Collective has worked together for twelve years writing as Bawaka Country and as kin (Bawaka Country et al., 2018a, 2018c; Bawaka Country et al., 2013, Suchet-Pearson et al., 2013). The Yolŋu researchers, esteemed elder Laklak, her three younger sisters Ritjili, Merrkiyawuy and Banbapuy, and their daughter Djawundil adopted Sarah, Sandie and Kate as sisters, daughters and granddaughters, placing them in important relations of care and responsibility to each other and to the diverse beings and becomings that make up Country. This does not imply the non-Indigenous researchers become, in any way, Yolŋu,<sup>3</sup> but situates them within important relationships of accountability under Yolŋu Law (Bawaka Country et al., 2018b).

Our collaboration is itself a process of co-becoming as Yolŋu, ŋapaki and non-human beings co-constitute each other through relationships which are always in emergence. These relationships have been emerging for more than a decade and are underpinned by a series of commitments and understandings based around challenging dominant Western assumptions and understandings; nurturing opportunities for respectful connection, sharing and learning; and creating opportunities for reciprocity (West, 2018; Todd, 2016). In talking back to dominant understandings of climate change and associated injustices and inequities, this sharing of Wukun forms part of our collective's commitment to decolonising structures and processes. Our collective working together is an enactment of *märr* (love, ties) and *gurrutu* (more-than-human kinship) with all their day-to-day beautiful, fraught, messy and potentially colonising, and decolonising, realities (we discuss our collective writing process in more detail in Bawaka Country et al. 2016b, 2018a, 2018c; Suchet-Pearson et al., 2013). For as the clouds gather and part, storm, bring forth rain, floods, destruction and growth, so too does Country, and so too does our collective (see Burarrwanga et al., 2019).

Wukun, the songspiral that we share here, is part of a book we are writing together, one of our reciprocal projects (Burarrwanga et al., 2019). Wukun is a songspiral of the sisters' homeland<sup>4</sup> of Rorruwuy in northeast Arnhem Land and their clan, the *Dätiwuy* clan. The sisters and their kin are responsible for the songspiral and have the authority and obligation to share it in appropriate ways.<sup>5</sup> The sisters' sharing is driven by a strong desire to transfer knowledge between female generations and nurture women's role in the ongoing *milkarri*, women's singing through keening, of songspirals into the past/present/future.<sup>6</sup> It is also driven by their desire to share knowledge with non-Indigenous

<sup>1</sup> In Aboriginal English usage, Country is much more than 'the environment'. Country encompasses the seas, waters, rocks, animals, winds and all the beings that exist in and make up a place, including people.

<sup>2</sup> Yirritja and Dhuwa are what anthropologists call 'moieties', a foundational relation of the Yolŋu cosmos in which everything is interconnected and interdependent (Burarrwanga et al., 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Adoptions of ŋapaki by Yolŋu are a powerful assertion of Yolŋu sovereignty and relational ontologies. These should not be read as a romantic adoption nor as a settler move to innocence that would somehow ameliorate Sarah, Sandie and Kate's fraught positionalities and colonial complicities as non-Indigenous academics living and working on stolen land (see Tuck and Yang, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Homelands are decentralised communities established by Yolŋu people so Yolŋu can live on their custodial Country.

<sup>5</sup> We acknowledge that the songspiral that was shared for our book and this paper was shared by the sisters' older brother, Gitjpurwala Ganambarr and Jeffrey Ganambarr, our son, and builds on their father, Manydjarri Ganambarr's version.

<sup>6</sup> *Milkarri* is women's singing of songspirals, a singing, keening chant, a soft tremulous voice redolent with emotion (Burarrwanga et al., 2019).

people to enhance non-Indigenous understandings of what it means to be and become with and as Country. However, not everything is shared. It is important to be careful and know the limits of what can be shared with different audiences in different contexts, to know our places (Battiste, 2008; Noxolo et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2018; Wright, 2018). Both these commitments – to share and to acknowledge limits to this sharing – are held by all in the Collective in ways that ensure reciprocity remains at the heart of our work together.<sup>7</sup> In this paper, we follow the Wukun songspiral as a deeply placed co-becoming shared in a particular context (and most adamantly not as an ethnography of an exotic other or a functionalist process of extraction. See Watts, 2013). Crucially, Wukun leads our piece; the stanzas of Wukun guide the written structure of the paper. What is talked about, shared, and brought to life is enabled by place. By acknowledging Bawaka Country as author, we acknowledge its authority, its diverse more-than-human relationality and its agency. In doing so we heed, as we can, its teachings, its messages and its call, including its call to share and to gather (Johnson and Larsen, 2013). Each of Wukun's five stanzas challenges the linearity of Western conceptions of a singular time and contributes a deepening understanding of what rethinking time from a Yolŋu perspective, or more accurately, from the perspective of Gathering Clouds at Rorruwuy, might mean for responding to climate change. We introduce the stanzas in turn and share some learnings that emerge from our engagements.

As we do this, we also engage with academic literature on weather and climate. The call of Wukun leads us to consider embodied, emotional, affective experiences of climate (Allen-Collinson et al., 2019; Head, 2016; Neimanis and Loewen Walker, 2014; Rose, 2008); Indigenous perspectives that emphasise the co-emergence of humans and their worlds (Jampijinpa Patrick, 2015; Watson-Verran and Chambers, 2009; Yunupingu and Muller, 2009); and critiques of linear, masculinist, human-centred notions of time, weather and climate from feminist and critical science studies scholars (Chakrabarty, 2009; Strang, 2015; Vannini et al., 2012; de Vet, 2017). As we look to some of the wonderful, critical conversations that have occurred around weather and time within and beyond the academy, Wukun leads, and so we have eschewed a 'traditional' academic structure that would see our work framed by a literature review. This follows recent discussions of citational politics (Mott and Cockayne, 2017; West, 2018) and signals the fundamental author-ity of Country, rather than human academics, as leading and framing the piece. The structure of this article is an actualization of the authority of Country and Wukun, of the responsibilities-as songspirals and of our commitment to a decolonizing thinking, writing and sharing practice.

And so we follow Wukun's leadership through the song. As we walk to our homeland, stanza one begins with a sharing of how time is non-linear, affective and plural. As the clouds begin to gather and the place waits in calmness, stanza two focuses on the more-than-human agency of multiple times. Stanza three illustrates how time co-becomes and humans are a part of this co-becoming. As the clouds begin to part in stanza four, they show the importance of limits, patterns and relationships for understandings of time and weather in ways that unsettle notions of control and human-centred power. Finally, we follow Wukun to suggest the need for more-than-human, place-based responses that centre co-becoming. In place of being *responsible to* or *responsible for* 'the planet' or 'the climate' as something separate, unified and controllable with humans as sole (and undifferentiated) agents, Wukun suggests we respond in more-than-human, situated, ethical ways. That is, Wukun points to the need to enact our *response-abilities* as time, weather and climate; enact out responsibilities in deeply relational ways. Here, humans cultivate their *abilities* to attend deeply as part of more-than-human worlds and *respond* as part of Country, climate and

time (Bawaka Country et al., 2018b).

Wukun spirals to encompass humans-as-Country, out through the generations and out through more-than-human relationships as place, until it reaches you, as you read this article, and differentially enrolls you in its call. Wukun spirals to make visible the affective experiences of weather and environmental co-becoming, the grief (Head, 2011, 2016), the love (Rose, 2008; Bawaka Country et al., 2018a), the nourishment of Country as healing, even the fear that lurks beneath proclamations of urgency, denial and belonging (Cook and Balayannis, 2015). Wukun gathers and invites all to dwell in their connections with the diverse life-worlds of place, in acknowledgement of different Indigenous presences and histories, and in ways that foreground the intricate, messy, place-based and dynamic webs of entanglements that hold and make us.

#### One

Wāṅa marrtji guyaṅi Nambatjju Yolŋu malawanaṅu Dhā-malamirr

Wan'thun marrtji Yolŋu,

Wāṅa guyaṅinan larrum Rinydjalju.

Rirrakay ḡarra ḡalmarajaḡ wukunlil maṅanlil

Walking to my homeland, aching in my heart with love for my homeland, thinking about my homeland, Nambatjju.

For I am Dhā-malamirr, person of the shark, my mouth bloody after catching prey and eating;

Turning my head from side to side, as a shark, thinking of where I am, in my place.

As I am walking, everything comes to life; the sound of my footsteps, the laughter, the singing, the milkarri, the crying, the joy of being home weaves into the air and into the clouds.

For Yolŋu people, singing Wukun is to sing Country and time into existence through co-becoming. Walking to their homeland is to practice connection, to live those connections as a product of them. As they walk in Wukun, as they walk and have walked on Country, as they milkarri, they yearn for their homeland in an affective and co-constitutive co-becoming. Yolŋu people yearn for Country and Country yearns for them (Watson-Verran and Chambers, 2009; Yunupingu and Muller, 2009).

Here, time is spiral, non-linear and affective. Wukun evokes and articulates a collectivity of past/present/future. Wukun begins with the singer walking to their homeland. Yet for Yolŋu, the singer does not simply exist as a lone individual, acting in a single time. The singer is so much more than one person singing. The singer/walker is those that sing together, those that milkarri, those that dance and those that listen. The singer is the clan whose homeland it is. The singer is the walker, a person from that homeland, a particular person who has passed away, and, at the same time, is people who have passed away both recently and a long time ago. The walker is also those of the clan who will pass away in the future, those whose identities are created through their connection to Rorruwuy, the clouds that gather, and the songspirals that gather them together as people and weather. So that this time of singing, of milkarri, brings all times to this point and this point to all times. Time becomes and is sustained by the walk, by everything weaving into the clouds and by the songspiral. Time is not something that is distant, or that continually expends itself, with the past receding into the distance and the future inevitably bearing down.

As the clouds weave, Wukun actively creates the season. This is a seasonality that is both spiral and multiple. The season that is being sung and brought into being is a season that contains within it the infinite spiral of other seasons. It is, at once, all the times that clouds have begun to gather, will gather, and very much the now. In walking, the singer/ancestor is creating the present in ways that contain within it the ongoing spirals of weather, of clouds, of songs and ceremony, of the nearing harvest season, all the nows of ancestors who continue to walk, to make up the clans and the memories of them, that make up the homeland.

And, as Yolŋu people walk to their homeland, yearning in and as Wukun, they also yearn as shark, turn their head from side to side, attending to the beings and belongings of Country. They look for and think of their place, attending to and as their more-than-human kin, to and as their connections, their place, with joy and sometimes sadness.

<sup>7</sup> Our ongoing work is underpinned by a dynamic research agreement and a series of intercultural principles (see [www.bawakacollective.com.au](http://www.bawakacollective.com.au)).

This is an attention that is richly affective and comes from deep, embodied knowledge - seeing, hearing, feeling, laughing - and that produces knowledge too of the cycles of plants and animals and weather, reanimating relationships and nourishing connections. So that, in walking, everything comes to life and the sounds of the walker weave up to the sky, letting the clouds know it is time to gather.

For Yolju, this walking is time. Time is attending to Country, being Country, feeling Country, living relationships. It is the getting of bushfoods, the gathering of oysters and larani, bush apple. It is the checking for bushfoods and the knowing, the feeling when they are ripe and ready, the joy, the touch of the ground, the sweat. Time is relationships with and as Country. And in this walking and checking and gathering, in these relationships, the beings and becomings of weather are active co-constituents. Weather is a lively presence, a source of information and temporal marking. It enrolls the beings and becomings of Country in a shared language or *dharuk* communicated through intimate, entangled relationships between people, processes, affects and things.

The cyclical and non-linearity of Yolju time allows for relationships to occur through time and for these to be held alive through stories and ceremony, including through songspirals. The Yolju world is alive with beings who no longer exist, and perhaps could never exist, in Western linear ontologies. Merrkiyawuy tells the story of one such encounter as she elaborates on the multiple and non-linear dimensions of time:

I went to Wessel Islands that belong to my great grandmother, Mum's grandmother, and I wanted to take my children, Arien and Siena, to show them where we come from... It is an island almost in Asia, four hours on the boat. We got there and I said, "Wait, we will go onto shore first, me and my children. I got onto shore and announced myself, said her name and her brother, the old man, he was like the king of that island."

"Hello waku, we are here. You don't know me but..." I told him who I was, and my children, I announced myself and we walked. And Siena looked. There was a little cave on the beach and bigger caves up on the hills, caves with hand prints all on the walls. Siena looked and said, "Mum, I can see something there."

I said, "Careful, it might be something dangerous."

She said, "No, it's fine. Look, that is a swag [a bedroll used for camping with canvas and a mattress]."

She looked in and found a brand new swag, a beautiful pink camping bed-roll. It was a gift, one from her yapas (sisters), the old one, there. So Siena is yapa [sister] to her great-great-grandmother. She has a link with that one. No one lived on the island. They used to a long time ago as there is an airstrip there. But not lately. We do believe that they [the ancestors] are there, all the time.

Time is co-existing. The practice of retelling stories, like the story of Merrkiyawuy's trip to the Wessel Islands, the ongoing spiraling of songspirals, the cycles of cloud formation, rain and weather, ensure these diverse beings, including spirits, ancestors, water, air and clouds, are active and present participants in the here and now. These beings create knowledge and Law, infuse the material world with meaning in ways that are immediately and actively connected to things that happened before and things yet to occur (Bawaka Country et al., 2016b; Janca and Bullen, 2003; Jampijinpa Patrick, 2015). As Merrkiyawuy says of her ancestors, "We are co-existing. They are in their time, we are in our time but we are here together. I feel them."

Dominant understandings of time tend to shy away from a close observance of the material environment as a means of telling and experiencing time (O'Brien, 2014; Strang, 2015; Watts, 2013). Rather, time is abstracted from embodied experiences of spirituality, materiality and place. This has important consequences for ways of being in the world, and for relationships with climate and weather (Chakrabarty, 2009; O'Leary, 2016; Wynne, 2010). Linear conceptions privilege causal relationships with one thing following another in strict, abstracted, predictable or model-able sequences. Time is seen as

coherent, stable and singular giving scientists, policy makers, forecasters and politicians the ability to uncover, know and author a particular authentic truth, and to predict 'the' future (Haraway, 1991). There is nothing universal or natural about such ideas of time, climate or weather (Achbari and van Lunteren, 2016; Anderson 1999; Henry, 2015). Rather, these are situated within specific, gendered and raced, histories of climate science and meteorology in ways deeply imbricated in the colonial project (for a discussion of the political and historical contingencies associated with the emergence of meteorology and climate science see Janković, 2006; Mahony, 2016; Naylor, 2006)

Indeed, the separation of the past, the now and the future, the strict linearity of time, are based on strong temporal assumptions that can have severely unjust consequences (Daley, Forthcoming; Perkins, 1998). The concept of a universal and singular time belies plurality and denigrates or makes invisible non-human understandings and experiences (Bawaka Country et al., 2016b). Many common framings of climate change, for example, obscure the massive changes wrought by colonialism and capitalism in the past several hundred years, tending to script them as interesting or relevant only in as much as they set the stage for the current changing climate. This critique is relevant to many of those concerned with climate change impacts as well as climate deniers. The frontier wars, the deep violences against diverse peoples, their worldviews, languages and cultures, their nourishing terrains (Rose, 1996) are, yet again, unspoken. The massive, disruptive changes wrought upon the lands and seas of First Nations people worldwide; the many beings and stories and people and trails and animals and plants with long, distinguished lineages forcibly removed from cities and towns, parks and golf courses, farms and ranches, the climate changed, the rules and laws - the protocols - broken, are re-invisibilised. The enduring nature of the processes that brought this about are also unacknowledged (Tuck and Yang, 2012; Wolfe, 2006).

There is a fragility too, associated with imposed linearity and separation, a tenuousness to constructions that require forced separation and control, particularly when something like weather cannot be controlled. So, when climate's linearity, separation and coherence come under question, as it does with climate change (for if climate is, by definition, stable, then to introduce instability is an oxymoron), and when time must only be a linear march, then ideas of change and acceleration rock the foundations. It becomes unsurprising that fear and fear-based narratives become dominant, and responses become once again an effort to impose control through the very structures that led to the problem in the first place (Cook and Balayannis, 2015). Such control can lead to denial, to down-the-rabbit-hole discussions of whether or not climate change even exists and whether any single event is different from 'normal'. These discussions miss the point; the point of the hurt and the violence, the protocols damaged, the disrespect done, and the need to do things differently with and as place.

In contrast, Wukun tells us that time is not linear, and that humans cannot stand separate from an abstract time or weather, indeed cannot 'tell time', predict the weather or control the future in any unidirectional way. Rather, humans are in relationship with it, they emerge with and co-become time and weather. Indigenous scholars and people working with Indigenous cosmologies have long emphasized the plurality and ontological situatedness of concepts like time and place (Bawaka Country et al., 2016a; Christie, 1994; Johnson and Larsen, 2013; Hsu et al., 2014; O'Brien, 2014; Ritchie, 2013; Kwaymullina, 2008) as well as the importance of weather, beings and becomings such as winds, snow, and seasons, in shaping time, place, self and culture - and vice versa. Low (2007), for example, looks at how wind weaves into Khoisan - Khoi and San peoples of Southern Africa - understandings of body and illness and is bound up with healing (see also Chand et al., 2014; Cochran et al., 2013; Green et al., 2010; Weatherhead et al., 2010 for examples of work that touches upon some Indigenous rich, diverse and place-based understandings of weather).

While the multiplicities and spirals of Yolju time, including the presence of ancestors in the present, extends many good and

nourishing, indeed fundamentally necessary, relationships (Kauanui, 2016; Moreton-Robinson, 2015), these connections also hold true for hurts done. The hurt and violence and protocols broken *now* are felt across the generations. The ancestors are hurting *now*, the afterlife is being hurt *now* (Smith et al., 2018; Watts, 2013). The past is hurt by the present. We are also hurting the ancestors from the future *now*. This means that while thinking of ‘future generations’ is important in bringing the realities of change alive, our children’s children are not separated from us by a gulf of time. Rather, they live now, already, in our bodies and through their active presence in this world. Doing disservice, violence and disrespect in the present means disservice, violence and disrespect to ancestors, and to the past and future that co-exist in the present.

## Two

Ŋalawurr gurruŋ waywayun wāŋa dhāwal mukthun Rinydjalju.  
Maŋan yurra gurruŋ waywayun Rinydjalju ŋarrak wāŋa Nambatju  
bilyunmarāŋalŋa.

Ŋalawurr gurruŋ dhawalŋur gurruŋ yurra Mali-Wutjawuywa Bon way-  
wayun yurra bilyunmarāŋalŋa Djarraran

Ŋalawurr gurruŋ waywayun yurra Rinydjalju.

Ŋalawurr gurruŋ Ŋamandamirr, dhāwal mukthunan wāŋa Rinydjalju Ŋala-  
wurr gurruŋ.

Wāŋa Rinydjalju, wukun ŋarraku waywayun marrtji, Ŋalarra gurruŋ marrtji.

The clouds gather, the place is waiting in calmness. The cloud becomes a long thin  
line, this is my spear. I turn, pointing towards my homeland; the clouds are there  
at Rorruwuy for me, I am from that place.

The clouds sit above me at Wutjawuy. I point towards Bon, the muddy waters of  
Rorruwuy, turning towards Djarraran.

The cloud points towards Rinydjalju, the place that nurtures me, the source of my  
life, the giver of Dätiwuy and Ŋaymil knowledge and philosophy.

The clouds are coming from Ŋamanda, at Yirrkala.

The clouds are now pointing to towards Rinydjalju; from Ŋalarra they come toget-  
her.

After the walk to their homeland, after the sounds have been sent to the sky, after the singers, and those who sing through their tears, the dancers, clans and ancestors have woven themselves and their song into the air, the clouds begin to gather. The clouds, that are also the Yolju Dhuwa clans, are named and called from the different homelands to come. The place waits and the clouds point to the different clan lands. When a cloud comes from a particular direction, it is also the Dhuwa clan from over there. So as the clouds gather, the Dhuwa clans are acknowledged, building up ready for the rain. In calling the clouds, the songspirals calls and the cloud at Rorruwuy calls and the singer/walker/dancer/ancestor calls in a more-than-human, pluralist-temporal expression. This is an active more-than-human weaving of time, where the clouds have agency to gather clans and to bring seasons into existence. A plural time, that is the time of now and the time of seasons and of ancestors and of the practice of walking, singing, dancing, calling, resting, asserting themselves in multiple non-linear ways. Time and weather are Country: they evoke, guide, call, bring together and challenge.

Here, there is no single abstract, distant time and no single passive weather, discrete and separate from people (Ravenscroft, 2018; Rose, 2000). Many commentators point out that the concept of the Anthropocene draws inspiration from Enlightenment framings that place humans separate from, and in control of, nonhuman realities (Larsen and Johnson, 2017). Even while their actions may be criticised, humans, usually a homogenised notion of humans, are deployed as in control, with ultimate agency. Having created the problem, they and only they must solve it, must save the world (Davison, 2015).

Yet, far from a passive backdrop, Country and weather, in this case the clouds and the clans and the song and the ancestors and the singer/s and dancer/s from now, before and in the future, are sentient and have agency. They communicate and teach and respond. They make and are made by time. These agencies are central to the starting of the rain, the gathering of the clouds that happen in the season of Worlmamirri, that indeed, help make the season. Seasons are not set by arbitrary dates on a linear calendar (Rose, 1996; O’Brien, 2014; Burarrwanga et al., 2013)

but are communicated by Country, including in relationship with humans, indeed through their co-becoming.

Talking of how to translate time into Yolju matha, eldest sister Laklak suggests walu, the sun,

tells us the time. Do you want to know the time? Look where walu is, look at the shadow, the shadow of the tree and the shadow of yourself. Or when it’s about two or three o’clock you might hear a garrukal bird [kookaburra] singing, telling you the time, telling you it’s nearly sunset. When the garrukal sings, the people remember that sunset is coming.... When you fish or get ganguri you always know there is walu, time. Walu tells you when to do these things. We use walu to measure things too. So walu is the sun, walu is the day, walu is time. Walu is very important for Yolju people; it is made by our ancestors. (Burarrwanga et al., 2013: 106).

The sun sends messages, as does the garrukal, so that time is not told by humans alone, in some kind of managerial relationship. Rather, time, in plural ways, is told by active more-than-human agencies. It is communicative, relational and agential. More, given the co-constitution of these elements (including humans) with Country and with time itself in all its multiplicity, time tells itself. It also calls, instructs, reminds and reproduces, connects all to their ancestors, remaking connections to them anew as they stand here now.

Through ongoing pluralist co-emergence, multiple times tell those who attend, those who heed the call of songspirals, to undertake certain activities, including to gather, as clans and as clouds, to re-create rain, and enable the intimate connections between all living and non-living things. In place of singularity and linearity, there is multiplicity. In place of a static or unruly backdrop, there are agencies and communications. Here, plural, nonlinear times are material presences in and as place, including those who have passed away but remain in/with/as time in emergent co-existence. This is a rich and communicative weather, weather beyond metaphor, weather beyond a specific unconnected rain event.

To say weather beyond metaphor, communicative weather, is not to imply easy communication or naïve romanticised harmony. Climate change, rather than abstraction and something separate from humans, could be seen as mis-communications, communication not understood, protocols and relationships under stress, if not actually broken. So that perhaps for the first time in a long time (which is an infinite spiralling time), there may be times when the clouds do not gather as expected, or when the harvest season may not follow as memory tells it should. Such changes are a challenge for Yolju people and many are grappling with their responses.

Wukun tells us that such difficulties in communication, wayward messages and unexpected changes, mean that attention must be paid in ever deeper ways, that the communications of Country must be engaged with receptively, with humility and through an understanding of our mutual entanglements. For example, Rrawun Maymuru, one of the sisters’ sons worries about the cues that he may have missed, such as dying and missing casuarina trees. Others are wondering what it means when certain flowers flower ‘too early’, out of sync with the songspirals. They are working with the changes, attending to what is happening, what messages may be being communicated, paying attention and responding in the best way they can with and as place, acknowledging protocols under strain; perhaps even broken, and in need of healing.

This differs from rushing about for new unifying, and potentially colonising, ‘solutions’ to crisis. As Rrawun says:

You have to stop and think what you are doing and try and listen to your spirit. The spirit will tell you, the land will tell you... It is about learning from the land. If you believe in what you believe, later you may find it. It depends on your own path and belief...

While you do have to stop and think and listen, you must do so in a spirit of humility because part of attending as Country means acting

with humility. Humans are not the new gods to make and unmake and save the planet single-handed. Rather, they are in relationship, beings who must respond to, respond with, respond as other more-than-human beings, with the places that after all, do not stand separate from us.

Human perception cannot even start to comprehend many of the complex temporalities at work here. For by attending to more-than-human agencies of time and weather, diverse multiplicities emerge even as they are beyond human understanding. This is the seasonal time of clouds gathering. It is also the time of hydrological cycles, of water moving through aquifers for thousands of years, of transpiration and growth. And short spirals, of the flash of lightning, claps of thunder, of traveling sound and light. There is neither a single weather, nor a single time, nor an inherent difference between time and matter and embodied experience, affect and the beings and becomings of Country.

Ada Smailbegović talks of starfish time (2015). Starfish may seem to be still, but longer attention, through time-lapse photography for example, shows them moving, changing. Smailbegović also talks of larval time, the time it takes for eggs to develop and hatch, a time that is a compound entity of other variables, longer in the cold, or sped up with increasing temperature. Larval time is the right time for eggs to hatch, a deeply relational and contingent time. As she points out, “many of the temporalities that are relevant for developing a politics of time in the Anthropocene—such as minute and incrementally accumulating processes of change, or the long duration of geological time, rock time, or the temporal rhythms of non-human organisms—are beyond the human sensorium” (2015: 97).

Then there are beings that experience hundreds, thousands of generations within a human lifetime. For such beings, the memories, learnings and modes of passing on experience are, it almost goes without saying (yet it must be said as it is so often not), radically different from any human’s in terms of the ways they experience change. The immensity of the alterity is, literally, incomprehensible to humans. We can’t know how and what these beings know. But we can be aware that they have knowledges and experiences beyond us. For many people, coming from different cultural and ontological positions, not knowing does not mean not connecting or not respecting. For it would seem that there are things that humans cannot and should not know. We don’t need to know what starfish know. But we should know they live and experience and think beyond us. We should seek respect and be aware of how our lives are entangled, how we co-become. There is a responsibility to be and act and know from our place.

### Three

Ŋalawurr dhāwal mukthunan wāṇajurnha.

Rinydjaljūny waywayunan yukurra Bulpindi ṇurinyi bumar wukuṇdhu.

Ŋurru djipthunanmaraṇal wukuṇdhu.

Wukun malanyṇha gurrun marrtji waywayyunan Ŋamanda, gurrun wukun marrtji, dhawal ṇakaraman.

The gathered clouds settle over my home Rorruwuy, pointing to Rinydjalju, Bulpindi; as the clouds settle, they claim the land.

The point of the cloud spear tilts downwards creating the waterspout.

The other clouds are still floating in, gathering, coming together from Ŋamanda; the clouds come from all directions, from the other Dhuwa homelands, labelling themselves, saying which Dhuwa Country they come from. As they gather, they name the places and directions they are coming from, the places they pass through, and the places where they are going, telling the other clouds where to go, where to gather, where to meet.

In Wukun, the people of the clans carry the clouds on their backs as they come to Rorruwuy. They join to form an enormous cloud ready for the rain. And as they come, they call out the names of the places. This not only maps Country and provides orientation but is a way of restating their connections. For Yolṇu who hear and learn this songspiral, the calling of the names lets them know how to travel to that Country. It means they can see and be the Country, flying across it even if they have never been there before. Weather is clearly not separate from a person, as it is not separate from the clouds, from the temporal practice that is gathering, from the connections to Country reanimated by the

naming. And it is certainly not separate from culture.

Wukun, then, not only suggests a need to tell time in plural ways and to attend to the ways time itself tells but it also speaks to the co-constitution of time, weather and more-than-human Country. These are place-based, pluralist, more-than-Western/colonial/white, more-than-human co-becomings. Weather - the sun, the clouds, the clans that gather, the starfish as it moves and the eggs as they develop and hatch - tell us that time does not exist separately from more-than-human relationships and more-than-human worlds. It does not order worlds in a strict and linear, universalized sequence. It is not abstract, or empty. It is not separate from humans.

This is a “transcorporeal collaboration” (Neimanis and Loewen Walker, 2014: 565) that make and weather a season’s change, a collaboration within which bodies are not discrete entities whose borders may stand or be breached, but are themselves always more than human. As Neimanis and Loewen Walker go on to point out, “we are not masters of the climate, nor are we just spatially “in” it. As weather-bodies, we are thick with climatic intra-actions; we are makers of climate-time.” For Vannini et al. (2012), this is *weathering*, a process through which people make and remake places and shape their sense of self (see also Allen-Collinson et al., 2019; de Vet, 2017; Rantala et al., 2011).

It follows that it is not possible to stand outside time, even though there are illusions of doing so, just as it is not possible to stand outside place, outside the weather, or indeed outside research, or our relationships with each other, our more-than-human kin. Rather, through co-becoming we bring time into being - rich, non-linear and plural. Time is more-than-human relationality as Yolṇu feel/see/breathe/sing/dance clouds, walk attending to Country, sweat or shiver, talk on the phone or share posts on Facebook; as we write and you read. Indeed, for Yolṇu, while transcorporeality is central, so too is more-than-humanity. So that while it is true that “we” as humans are makers of climate-time, so are the clouds, so is the process of gathering, of tilting down to claim lands, so are the clans and the ancestors and the ancestors of starfish and the starfish now.

This co-becoming is manifested both in the multiple now and through patterns of seasonality and ongoing relationship. Laklak explains of wolma, when it is hot with the first thunder and lightning, that the lightning and thunder are announcing to all that Barra’mirri Mayaltha, the rains, are coming. It is hot and humid and nights get sweaty. She says, “The night sweating is a message telling us fruit like larrani, bush apple, is getting ripe” (Burarrwanga et al., 2013: 106). Laklak is speaking of a direct and embodied relationship, one in which sweat co-becomes with fruit and with the lightning and the season (Burarrwanga et al., 2013; Bawaka Country et al., 2016a). Consider the ways this differs from observing that it is nearly summer, or it is December, so the fruit will ripen soon (or that the peaches should be in the shop), observations that ostensibly remove the human observer from the equation.

Such discussion echoes Ingold’s assertion that “in the open world, beings relate not as closed, objective forms but by virtue of their common immersion in the fluxes of the medium”, which is to say the “weather-world” (2007: S20; see also Ingold, 2010). Yet it goes beyond immersion in a medium, to co-constitution. Here, Yolṇu co-constitute the world and this medium within which we live. Indeed, that which is co-constituted is Country, full of story and song, not a backdrop, a medium, but a richly nourished and attended landscape, where nothing is anonymous or unimportant or unconnected.

The co-emergence of Yolṇu with and as weather and time, with and as Country, speaks deeply to ownership and belonging in ways that underpin and animate Yolṇu fights for rights to land and sea Country (Morphy, 1983; Morphy and Morphy, 2006; Williams, 1986. See also Ravenscroft, 2018 for a broader discussion of Indigenous sovereignty, colonialism and weather). It also speaks deeply to understandings of, and responses to, climate change. For this is not a response to something that sits outside, separate from humans. As the clouds gather, they are gathering people and people are gathering them. We are co-becoming. So

that the co-emergence of people with each other and with weather and time speaks to a need to understand and attend to the weather and climate as us, to respond as weather rather than to it. Climate change is never over there or simply in the future. It is never in the past. It does not live in statistics on paper or models on a computer as if the paper/computer was an artefact that could have an existence separate from humans, from the trees and metals that grew it, from the humidity or the mites or from the ways these things all come into being together.

As Laklak and her sisters say in our book on songspirals (Burarrwanga et al., 2019):

We gathered, for this is our land, our place. We long for the land and the land longs for us. It wants to be with the person who walks. The frisson of connection, of the land and the person's co-becoming, it holds them together. It is the raki, the string. When there is no-one there on the land it grows uncared for. Everything overgrows because you don't look after it, you don't burn it, you don't hunt on it to make a balance. So things overgrow, they get out of balance. For us, we balance as we care for Country and it cares for us. But we are not separate from it. We are in kinship with it. This kinship, gurruṯu, underpins who we are. It is between us Yolḷu, with each other and the land and all its beings.

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#### Four

Wukun marrtji mala-wulkthuna nhaltjarr ṅanapurruṅ bānyil bānyil muṅ-thunan, Yolḷunhan Mali-Wutjawuy garṅayarra.

Dhuwana marrtji mala-wulkthun Wukun, nhaltjarr Nyelamurru, Yurraymurru, Roniwa.

Gulkthunan ṅanapurruṅgalnha marrtji, dhuwana marrtji mala-wulkthun wukun.

The clouds are separating. What has happened? The cloud is over us, over me, over the person from this land.

Here, the clouds are separating. Why? The clouds are separating at Nyelamurru, Yurraymurru, Roniwa.

The clouds are separating here with us now, in the future and in the past; as they always do, always have and always will.

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In Wukun, the clouds separate. The clouds communicate, “Now we will separate.” But why they separate is not known. There are limits to understanding. There are things and processes that humans may be a part of, but that they neither control nor understand. For if the clouds have knowledge and agency then this means there are things they know that humans cannot know, should not know.

Indeed, the concepts of time and of weather that we discuss here are diverse and not easily translatable. We try to share, Wukun shares, but there are limits to understanding. Much is beyond words, certainly beyond English. It is in the feeling and the emotion, the sound. It is the clouds whose intentions we do not know, cannot know for we are not clouds ourselves even as we co-become with them. It is important to point out that Indigenous concepts that might be translated as weather or climate, have meanings that are much broader, and more diverse, than any translation might imply (Leduc, 2007, 2016).

Limits to knowing, knowing from one's place, humility and respect are all central within Rom, Yolḷu Law. It is important that certain things are shared only in the right way, at the right time, with and by the right people. And indeed, there are things that some know that others never will. And other things that are beyond people entirely, such as why the clouds announce their intention to separate, and in what mode they communicate with each other. Within this framing, not knowing invites respect.

And even as the clouds separate, and even as the singer does not know why, Yolḷu do know that the clouds are held together through kinship, in and as time through the spirals of generations. It is part of the spirals, as clouds separate, make rain, renew, and then come back together. The gurruṯu, the cycles of kinship, and the raki, the string of connection that is love, binds all together through co-constitution, including the clans who are, after all, the clouds. As Laklak and her sisters say in Songspirals (Burarrwanga et al., 2019):

Knowing the cloud is there, knowing that we are always connected, that is our kinship, our gurruṯu, and our Law, our Rom. Rom is the underlying rules and connections that bind us together, that tell us what to do. It is the respect. Rom tells us that we do not know everything, we cannot know everything. Rom tells us that we are always connected even as we separate, even as the cloud covers the sun.

Here, the patterns and connections of weather are fore-grounded. So that while co-becoming is diverse and plural, while times of water and clouds and starfish are different, while the ancestors live now, while our dead relative sings a song to connect and nourish future generations, these pluralistic and diverse co-becomings are not disordered. There are complex patterns to the time-place relationships of and as weather.

This then, centres relationships and patterns in ways that manifest non-linear, cyclical times and defy divisions between weather as ephemeral and random, and climate as structured and knowable. Here, there is a divergence from some of the emerging work in cultural geography which, while focusing on weather as sensory, relational and embodied in beautiful and important ways, none-the-less sometimes sees weather as ephemeral. Mike Hulme (2017), for example, writes on climate saying “But hurricanes, blizzards and thunderstorms are merely transient weather events, the outworking of a restless and constantly changing atmosphere. Climate is something else, hinting at a physical reality that is both more stable and durable than the weather. Unlike the weather, climate is therefore an idea of the human mind.”

Hulme talks of weather as having immediacy, capturing instantaneous atmospheric conditions, and of the unsettling arbitrariness of the restless weather being tamed and interpreted through climate so that climate creates order and a promise of regularity. Climate is of the mind, weather is not? Yet to see weather in this way - as embodied, yes - but as arbitrary, unsettling, transient is to miss exactly what Yolḷu songspirals, larval time, the patterns, rhythms, spirals and communications of wind as healing, can teach, the way they connect, and co-become. It also misses the way that the beings and becomings of weather too are enrolled in, and enrol us in, webs of kinship and responsibility. Finally, it misses that the patterns of climate exist far beyond human minds, have their own existence and agency, have knowledge and law, even as they are entangled with us.

Weather connects to and as place, and to and as other places through patterned relationships. We are connected through, for example, the clouds gathering from different places, coming, joining, and then going again, to rain; the breeze which comes from one Country bringing with it messages; the wind of Guwak, the nightbird, that takes us to the afterlife. Weather also connects to and as time in ways distinctly non-ephemeral. It doesn't just randomly turn up and there is nothing ‘mere’ or ‘disordered’ about it. There is no abstract, rigid, measurable or technocratic climate and neither is there random, arbitrary, ephemeral weather. Rather, there is a co-becoming in and with place as Country. Country recognises the humans who dwell there, communicates and nourishes them in part through weather, and humans recognise Country, through relationships of co-becoming.

And where there is grief, as there is, and where communications are harder to understand, as they are in the context of a changing climate, this means attending deeper, in, with and as place - not throwing up hands at the arbitrariness of it all, nor imposing greater control over an errant figment of certain minds. Rather, it means staying with the messages, finding place-based responses that heed Country, that reconnect and continue to nourish or rebuild protocols and retain or heal good relations (Atleo, 2011). For Yolḷu, this means responses that follow Rom, through respect and kinship with more-than-human beings. It also means acknowledging grief, as well as joy, connecting through embodied and affective modes, singing Wukun, including through keening, as a mode of healing (see Rose, 2008, Willox et al., 2013 for importance of affect and environmental change in other Indigenous cosmologies). As our Collective suggests:

We can't be happy all the time. If something breaks, we must cry. If we are happy, we must laugh. It is the same with land, with the wind and current, the birds and animals; they all have emotion. When milkarri comes, when the ladies cry, if something bad happens, you've got to cry, it's part of you. It's all about connecting you to the land ... That is milkarri. We are healing (Burarrwanga et al., 2019).

This is not a call for humans to take *responsibility* for the climate as something passive and external from them in a paternalistic and universalising relationship. To do so would reflect and further reinforce the very logics that separate humans as the only ones capable of agency and suggest a universalised human experience (Meissner, 2017; Chiew, 2014; Bawaka Country et al., 2018b). Rather, *response-ability as* evokes our abilities to respond as entangled beings, becoming together. Wukun suggests a need to admit a broader range of practices and relations, to cultivate *response-abilities as* weather, through and with Country, in specific ways, through specific relationships, as specific places.

When time is understood in its multiplicity, spiralling and connecting generations, holding diverse temporalities through radical co-existence that encompass the infinite within the immediate (Howitt, 2002; Janca and Bullen, 2003; Milroy and Milroy, 2008), this means we live *response-abilities as* through multi-species, more-than-human generations. As Van Dooren (2015) suggests, this invites us to “live in a way that practices an accountability to life, as an immense, intergenerational, heritage; to live with a mindfulness that we are but one insignificant part of this larger collective ...” (see also Van Dooren, 2014; Bastian, 2017). This is the gift that Wukun invites us to live up to (Bastian, 2017).

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#### Five

Nhã dhuwali ganydjarr marrtjin Warngarrkjanur.

Murray murray murray.

Garnga marrtji dharyun, garnga lurrmun bikulandji.

Dhukarr marrtji dharyun Yikpađi, Bunthamarr.

Wulminda dhuwali mokywu, Namurrajanig'gu, Wutjawuywa.

What is it? Look at that rain! Softly falling on our footprints. With its strength it comes down at Warngarrkjanur.

Clouds moving as they come together, the waterspout starts, the rain comes; the sound of the wind and the raindrops come together.

It is raining on the pathways and the water fills the tracks that the people and animals have made; filling up the depressions, the waterholes; the land is drinking the water, it sinks into the ground.

It is raining on from Yikpađi to Bunthamarr.

The land is drinking, it belongs to the spirit, Namurrajanig, to the spirits and the people from the past, from now and the future. When it rains, we walk on that wet pathway; it is the same path that the spirits and the people have always walked on. It is wet now, was wet then, will always be wet when the rain comes.

We walk on that wet pathway because the pathway, the land itself, belongs to us and we belong to the land.

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The rain begins. The nourishing rain that revives and makes anew. It rains the trees, the tracks, the plants, all that is Country. And through and with the rain, there is belonging, of the land to the people and people to the land. And through the tears of the rain, grief may be stilled. As our Collective says (Burarrwanga et al., 2019):

And when it rains, that land cools down and that is the tears; it stills our grief and sorrow and we return home. The rain makes that land new, it renews the grass and the trees grow. The trees grow tall with branches and leaves until they flower and fruits grow. The birds gather for the fruit and we, as one people, will sit in that shade.

Wukun is a songspiral of Yolŋu clans coming together, of clouds coming together and renewing life. It is the tears that make the tree that Yolŋu people sit under as birds gather the fruit. It is also an evocation of how others might come together, to reconnect and remake protocols, to turn not away from climate/weather, but toward it, to remake protocols rather than continue to create distance.

For, while many dominant forms of weather-human relations are linked strongly to practices of disaster response and control which position weather events as isolated, unknowable and unpredictable, *response-abilities as* supports the ways people and cultures co-become with weather, offering insight into long-term practices that are richly engaged, diversely knowledgeable and sustaining. *Response-abilities as* moves away from claims that climate change or the Anthropocene is driven by a generic and universal ‘humanity,’ to open space for a focus on the particular configurations of humans, other beings, and formations of power and violence that drive climate change, and to be open to pluralist configurations that may respond differently.

So notions of *response-ability as* centre questions of ethics: placing us all squarely within an ethics of co-becoming, demanding that we attend to the connections that bind and co-constitute us. And this, fundamentally, includes time, going beyond linear ideas of past present future, acknowledging the violences of the past that exist in the present, and also recognising their ongoing nature. It insists the consequences that might otherwise be constructed as in the future are part of us today. One cannot separate out the clouds gathering today from gatherings past, the violences of today, from the violences past or ignore the ways that the violences of colonialism, of erasure and loss, are re-asserted everyday. Neither, however, can one separate out the continuities and survivals, the ongoing relationships and protocols, or the ways those protocols are still here through the presence of ancestors and spiralling time. These are the protocols that are alive now.

Living *response-abilities as* climate, as place, as entangled more-than-humans points to the need for diverse, situated responses. There is no one clear response, not for a generic humanity, not for all Indigenous people, not even for all Yolŋu. For we are all differently positioned, both in terms of our relationships to power and in our relationships with and as place. It is a matter of coming into “mutual acknowledgement in and through place” (Larsen and Johnson, 2017: 191), specific places, within a grounded and inclusive ethical relationality within which our entanglements are prioritised. It is through such mutual acknowledgement that Country, or place, may, through its pluralist more-than-human ontologies, actively guide and teach, bring us “into an understanding of our interconnectedness with others” (Larsen and Johnson, 2017).

In critiquing dominant modes of relating to weather, including technoscientific approaches, we want to acknowledge the hard work and passion of many climate scientists and those wanting to make change. Scientists and activists often live their bonds with the planet deeply (Soule, 2007). Yet many feel constrained to make and remake a certain discourse, a certain reality, to be convincing, even while they seek different ways of understanding and living the relationality they feel. This is reflected in calls that the next great climate challenges are social (ISSC/UNESCO, 2013; Williams, 2018). While we agree that they are indeed social, we suggest they are more than social. They can be found in the very relationships between diverse human sociality and their co-emergent environments, the places of their being, the very things that make us.

We have shared Wukun with you in the hope that the clouds gathering can help promote deeper relational relationships with and as place. The songspiral that spirals out to you as you have read this piece, enrolls you in a different way of understanding more-than-humans and their relationships. In a multi-layered way, in a rich, more-than-human co-constitution of patterns and relationships, including those that make, tell and are times, Wukun enables the rippling and spreading of knowledge and of caring relations between people and Country as guided by Country, nourishing the infinitely plural, deeply situated, yet infinitely connected co-becomings with and as place.

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## Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

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